



Representative Pete P. Gallego – Fighting for Veterans

A Full Accounting of U.S. Rep. Gallego’s Efforts on Behalf of America’s Veterans

Dear Friend,

Taking care of our veterans when they come home is one of the most sacred promises our country has ever made.

I have not been in Congress for very long, but the first legislation I filed in the House of Representatives was about helping veterans get access to the care they need (HR 1134). Since then, I’ve worked non-stop to fight for veterans in Texas and throughout our nation.

America’s veterans did not fight for our country as Democrats or Republicans – they fought as Americans. Congress needs to follow this example and put patriotism ahead of politics. We should all be angry about the VA’s failures – and united in our commitment to solve them.

For me, supporting our veterans is about more than good policy. It’s personal. My father served in World War II. As a kid growing up in rural Far West Texas, my family didn’t focus on being a Republican or Democrat. Instead, they taught me to focus on right and wrong. Fulfilling our promise to take care of those who fight for our country is the right thing to do.

That’s why through my constituent advocacy, I’ve helped Texas veterans recover nearly \$1.4 million of benefits that were wrongly delayed or denied by the VA.

As a member of the House Armed Services Committee, I’ve gone to war zones in Afghanistan to see first-hand the dedication of those who serve us. I’ve also visited with troops who serve at Fort Bliss in El Paso; Laughlin Air Force Base (AFB) in Del Rio; and the military installations in San Antonio, including Lackland AFB, Camp Bullis, Randolph AFB, and Fort Sam Houston. Our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines need to know that we have their back.

You deserve to know where I stand and how I vote on veterans issues. I’ve prepared this handout to help folks do exactly that. Please reach out if you have any questions. My door is always open.

Sincerely,

Pete P. Gallego
Member of Congress

Are you a veteran in need of assistance with the VA? Pete can help. Call the San Antonio office.

Washington, DC
(202) 225-4511

Del Rio, TX
(830) 488-6600

San Antonio, TX
(210) 927-4592

El Paso, TX
(915) 872-1066

Eagle Pass, TX
(830) 488-6600

Email: Pete.TX23@mail.house.gov



Website: <http://Gallego.House.Gov>



Veterans are tired of promises, and that’s why actions speak louder than words.

I’ve supported efforts to (1) make it easier to fire VA managers who have failed their duties, (2) reduce the backlog, (3) fix scheduling problems, (4) ensure that there is an independent review of VA policies and procedures, and (5) address many other major problems.

I’ve also had a special focus on addressing the needs of rural veterans in west Texas, many of whom live several hours from clinics or advanced care facilities.

- Rep. Pete P. Gallego

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Casework: U.S. Rep. Gallego Fighting for Texas Veterans

- Rep. Gallego has fought hard for individual constituents by advocating for them with the VA. In fact, he has started casework on behalf of over 500 veterans in the congressional district. The total savings for Texas veterans as a result of Congressman Gallego's efforts? \$1,391,625 as of October 21, 2014. That's over a million dollars in VA benefits which were wrongly denied or delayed to Texas veterans until Rep. Pete Gallego got involved and helped.
- Rep. Gallego also has hosted numerous casework fairs to reach out to veterans and make sure that their congressman is helping them when they need assistance. These have taken place in San Antonio, Del Rio, El Paso, and Fort Stockton.

Outreach: U.S. Rep. Gallego Working with Texas Veterans

- Rep. Gallego and staff for the congressional office routinely meet with veterans throughout the district and in the Washington, DC office.
- Rep. Gallego also has hosted formal veterans roundtables throughout the congressional district, including in San Antonio, Eagle Pass, Brackettville, Del Rio, Van Horn, and El Paso.
- The 23rd congressional district of Texas has 24% of the total land area of the Lone Star State. When Pete is not voting in DC, he is visiting with constituents in any of the twenty-nine counties that make up the district – from El Paso to San Antonio and south to the 800 miles of US-Mexico border.

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Key Legislative Efforts Led by U.S. Rep. Pete Gallego

HR 1134: Improving Transportation for Veterans in Highly Rural Areas

- Rep. Gallego introduced this legislation, and a few months later the VA voluntarily introduced a new pilot program that was almost identical.
- Establishes a pilot program to provide transportation grants for veterans service organizations and state-run veterans agencies to assist veterans in highly rural areas get access to health care facilities.

HR 3214: Preserve our National Security Act

- Rep. Gallego introduced this legislation.
- The goal of this bill was to ensure full funding during the government shutdown of VA employees as well as employees of the Department of Defense, Department of Homeland Security, and the intelligence community.

Fighting for 26 New or Expanded VA Health Care Facilities, Including Four in Texas

Motion to Instruct Conferees on HR 3230

- Rep. Gallego led this effort on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives.
- Rep. Gallego led this fight on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives for more than two dozen new or expanded VA facilities to be included in the final version of the VA reform bill.
- HR 3230 is the Veterans' Access to Care through Choice, Accountability and Transparency Act. Gallego's motion would have directed the House negotiators to accept a provision from the Senate that would create new VA facilities or improve current VA facilities in certain parts of the country. In particular, the Gallego motion would direct the House negotiators to agree to 26 new leases for VA facilities in 17 states plus Puerto Rico. These leases for additional VA facilities would allow the VA to address excessive wait times for medical care.

HR 3296: Pay America First Act

- Rep. Gallego introduced this legislation so that veterans and active duty military would receive payment of debt obligations before the US government paid debt obligations to foreign bond holders (e.g., China) in the event of a government default.

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Amendment (H. Amdt. 27) to HR 803, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

- *Rep. Gallego introduced this amendment* to help veterans in finding better manufacturing job opportunities.

Amendment (H. Amdt. 81) to HR 2216, Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act of 2014

- *Rep. Gallego introduced this amendment.*
- The purpose of this amendment was to designate an additional \$5 million for job training for veterans.

Amendment (H. Amdt. 536) to HR 3590, the Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation Council Advisory Committee

- *Rep. Gallego introduced this amendment.*
- The amendment would add veterans services organizations to the list of discretionary members of the Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation Council Advisory Committee.

Amendment (H. Amdt. 777) to HR 4681, Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Years 2014 and 2015

- *Rep. Gallego introduced this amendment.*
- This amendment would require the Director of National Intelligence--in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and Secretary of Homeland Security--to submit recommendations to Congress for retraining (a) veterans and (b) retired members of the intelligence community in cybersecurity.

Other Significant Legislation

HR 4031: Department of Veterans Affairs Management Accountability Act of 2014

- *Rep. Gallego voted to support this bill.*
- Allows for the VA secretary to remove an individual from federal service or transfer the individual to a General Schedule position at any grade determined appropriate.

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- Within 30 days of removing an individual from the Senior Executive Service, the VA secretary must submit to Congress a notice regarding his action and the reason for the removal.
- A removal under this bill is done in the same manner as the removal of a professional staff member employed by a member of Congress.

HR 3230: Veterans' Access to Care through Choice, Accountability, and Transparency Act of 2014

- Rep. Gallego voted to support this bill.
- Authorizes a Veterans Choice Card for certain veterans so they can get health services outside the VA system if they cannot get an appointment in that system within the department's wait time goals. It also provides the card to veterans residing more than 40 miles from a VA facility. The government is then to reimburse the non-VA health care provider for the services provided to the veteran.
- Creates a Commission on Care to examine the access of veterans to VA health care and how best to deliver health care to veterans over the next 20 years.
- Authorizes the secretary to hold accountable senior executives if the secretary determines performance warrants it.

HR 4810: Veterans Access to Care Act

- Rep. Gallego voted to support this bill.
- Directs the VA Secretary to enter into contracts with such non-VA facilities as necessary to furnish hospital care and medical services to veterans who:
 - have waited longer than the VHA's goal wait-time for an appointment for hospital care or medical services in a VA facility;
 - have been notified by a VA facility that an appointment for hospital care or medical services is not available within such wait-time goals; or
 - reside more than 40 miles from the VA medical facility, including a community-based outpatient clinic that is closest to their residence.
- Require VA to utilize existing contracts to the greatest extent possible, ensure that the non-VA care authorization encompasses a complete episode of care, and to submit a quarterly report to Congress on the care provided under this authority;
- Require VA, for two years after enactment, to reimburse non-VA providers at the greater of the following: the rate of reimbursement under VA, the rate of reimbursement under Medicare, or the rate of reimbursement under TRICARE;
- Eliminate performance awards and bonuses for all VA employees for the next two years.
- Require VA to enter into a contract with an independent entity or entities to conduct an assessment of the health care provided in VA medical facilities; report the findings and recommendations of the assessment to Congress; and, submit a report on the assessment,

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including an action plan and timeline for full implementation of the assessment's recommendations, to Congress.

HR 2189: To improve the processing of disability claims by the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

- *Rep. Gallego voted to support this bill.*
- Improvement of Claims Processing: Establishes within the VA a commission to study: (1) the backlog of veterans' disability claims and (2) the anticipated increase of appeals.
- Compensation and Pensions: Amends the Veterans Benefits Act of 2003 to extend through 2016 VA authority for the performance of medical disability evaluations by contract physicians.
 - Amends the Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 1996 to provide similar authorities with respect to permissible examination locations to licensed physicians under the pilot program authorizing the VA to use contract physicians to perform medical disability examinations of applicants for benefits under laws carried out through the Under Secretary for Benefits.
- Provisions of HR 2189 included:
 - HR 2138: Ending VA Claims Disability Backlog and Accountability Act
 - HR 2382: Prioritizing Urgent Claims for Veterans Act
 - HR 1623: VA Claims Efficiency Through Information Act of 2013
 - HR 1805: Veterans Claims Efficiency Through Automation Act
 - HR 1759: To direct the VA to submit quarterly reports to Congress on the timeliness in which the VA receives certain information from other federal departments or agencies
 - HR 1824: VA Regional Office Accountability Act
 - HR 1809: To direct the VA to provide notice of average wait times for processing claims and percentage of claims approved, and for other purposes
 - HR 2423: Disabled Veterans' Access to Medical Exams Improvement Act
 - HR 2341: Veterans Pension Protection Act
 - HR 2086: Pay As You Rate Act
 - HR 1494: Blue Water Navy Ship Accountability Act
 - HR 1288: World War II Merchant Mariner Service Act
 - HR 864: Designation of one city per year as an 'American WWII City'
 - HR 2185: Veterans Day Moment of Silence Act

HR 2481: Veterans Economic Opportunity Act of 2013

- *Rep. Gallego supported this bill, which passed by voice.*
- This bill would establish an Economic Opportunity Administration within VA, enabling the department to better focus on veterans' transition to civilian life.
- This bill included provisions from:
 - HR 2327: Veterans Economic Opportunity Administration Act of 2013

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- HR 2150: Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Programs Reauthorization Act of 2013
- HR 2210: Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship Improvements Act of 2013
- HR 331: To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to permit the centralized reporting of veteran enrollment by certain groups, districts, and consortiums of educational institutions.
- HR 1842: Military Family Home Protection Act
- HR 1898: To protect the child custody rights of deployed members of the Armed Forces, and for other purposes.

HR 671: Ruth Moore Act of 2013

- *Rep. Gallego supported this bill, which passed by voice.*
- This bill would reform the evidentiary standards for survivors of military sexual trauma (MST) who file claims for mental health conditions with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

HR 1405: To amend title 38, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to include a notice of disagreement form in any notice of decision issued for the denial of a benefit sought, to improve the supervision of fiduciaries of veterans under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

- *Rep. Gallego supported this bill, which passed by voice.*
- This legislation would require the VA secretary to include an appeals form along with any benefits-denial notification, institute key reforms to VA's fiduciary program and provide honorary veterans status to members of the National Guard and Reserves.
- HR 1405 included provisions from the following bills, as well:
 - HR 679: Honor America's Guard-Reserve Retirees Act
 - HR 733: Access to Veterans Benefits Improvement Act
 - HR 894: To improve the supervision of fiduciaries of veterans under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

S 893: Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2013

- *Rep. Gallego supported this bill, which passed by voice.*
- Directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to increase – as of December 1, 2013 – the rates of veterans' disability compensation, additional compensation for dependents, the clothing allowance for certain disabled veterans, and dependency and indemnity compensation for surviving spouses and children.
- Requires each such increase to be the same percentage as the increase in benefits provided under title II (Old Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance) of the Social Security Act, on the same effective date.

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HR 570: American Heroes COLA Act

- Rep. Gallego supported this bill, which passed by voice vote.
- Requires the VA Secretary to increase veteran's disability compensation when there is an increase in benefits payable under Title II of the Social Security Act; and
- Increases the rate of VA special monthly pay for severely injured veterans and provides a temporary rate for such pay until September 2018.

S 1471: Alicia Dawn Koehl Respect for National Cemeteries Act

- Rep. Gallego voted to support this bill.
- Authorizes the appropriate federal official to reconsider a decision to bury or honor the memory of a person in the National Cemetery Administration or in Arlington National Cemetery upon receiving information that such person may have committed a federal or state capital crime but was not convicted by reason of unavailability for trial due to death or flight to avoid prosecution.

HR 1402: Expiring Authorities Extension Act

- Rep. Gallego voted to support this bill.
- Extends through FY2015 appropriations to VA for (1) payment by the VA Secretary of a monthly assistance allowance to disabled veterans and members of the Armed Forces training or competing for the U.S. Paralympic Team and (2) a program for establishing and carrying out related programs and events.

HR 1412: Department of Veterans Affairs Expiring Authorities Act of 2013

- Rep. Gallego voted to support this bill.
- Authorizes appropriations to pay a monthly assistance allowance to a veteran with a disability invited by the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) to compete for a slot on or selected for the Paralympic Team during any month the veteran is training or competing in any event sanctioned by the USOC.

HR 2527: To amend title 38, United States Code, to provide veterans with counseling and treatment for sexual trauma that occurred during inactive duty training.

- Rep. Gallego supported this bill, which passed by voice.
- Extends a VA program of counseling, care and services for veterans for sexual trauma that occurred during active duty or active duty training to veterans who experienced such trauma during inactive duty training.

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HR 2011: Veteran's Advisory Committee on Education Improvement Act

- Rep. Gallego voted to support this bill.
- Extends through the end of 2015 the Veterans' Advisory Committee on Education.
- Requires the Committee to include Veterans representative of the post-9/11 operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

HR 3521: Department of Veterans Affairs Major Medical Facility Lease Authorization Act

- Rep. Gallego voted to support this bill.
- Authorizes the Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA) to carry out specified major medical facility leases (leases) in 19 states, including Texas.

HR 357: GI Tuition Fairness Act of 2014

- Rep. Gallego voted to support this bill.
- Directs the VA Secretary - for purposes of the All-Volunteer Force Educational Assistance Program and the program providing educational assistance to individuals who commenced service in the Armed Forces on or after September 11, 2001 - to disapprove public institution of higher education (IHE) courses that charges veterans out-of-state tuition, regardless of the veteran's state of residence.

HR 2942: To reestablish the Professional Certification and Licensure Advisory Committee (PCLAC) of the Department of Veterans Affairs through December 31, 2019.

- Rep. Gallego supported this bill, which passed by voice.
- PCLAC advises the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on credentialing organizations seeking to be recognized by the Department of Veterans Affairs so that veterans can use GI educational benefits to pay the cost of certification tests.

Additional Legislative Support and Cosponsorship

HR 1739: Veterans Backlog Reduction Act

- Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.
- Directs the VA Secretary to pay claimants of veterans' disability compensation provisional benefits when a claim is not adjudicated within 125 days of submission.

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(210) 927-4592

El Paso, TX
(915) 872-1066

Eagle Pass, TX
(830) 488-6600

Email: Pete.TX23@mail.house.gov



Website: <http://Gallego.House.Gov>



HR 32: Military Surviving Spouses Equity Act

- *Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.*
- SBP-DIC Offset Fix: Repeals certain provisions which require the offset of amounts paid in dependency and indemnity compensation from Survivor Benefits Plan (SBP) annuities for the surviving spouses of former military personnel.

HR 303: Retired Pay Restoration Act

- *Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.*
- Expresses a sense of Congress that military retired pay should not be reduced because a military retiree is also eligible for veterans' disability compensation awarded for a service-connected disability.

HR 333: Disabled Veterans Tax Termination Act

- *Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.*
- Amends federal military retired pay provisions to: (1) permit veterans with a service-connected disability of less than 50% to concurrently receive both retired pay and disability compensation; (2) eliminate provisions requiring a phase-in between January 1, 2004, and December 31, 2013, of concurrent receipt of retired pay and disability compensation; (3) eliminate a phase-in of concurrent receipt of retired pay and disability compensation for disabled veterans determined to be individually unemployable; and (4) require a limited reduction in retired pay for qualified disability retirees with less than 20 years of retirement-creditable service.

HR 569: Veteran's Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2013

- *Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.*
- Directs the VA Secretary to increase the (1) rates of veterans' disability compensation, (2) additional compensation for dependents, (3) the clothing allowance for certain disabled veterans, and (4) dependency and indemnity compensation for surviving spouses and children; and
- Requires increases to be equivalent to increases in benefits provide under Title II of the Social Security Act.

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HR 2086: Pay As You Rate Act

- Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill, which passed as part of HR 2189.
- Allow intern payments based on a disability for which a decision has already been made when adjudicating a claim with two or more disabilities.

HR 1494: Blue Water Navy Ship Accountability Act

- Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill, which passed as part of HR 2189.
- Direct the DOD Secretary to (1) review of the logs of each Navy ship known to have operated in the water near Vietnam during the Vietnam Era, (2) determine, for each such ship, the dates operated and its closest proximity to shore, (3) provide such information the VA Secretary; and
- Requires the VA Secretary to make such unclassified information publically available.

HR 543: Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2013

- Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.
- Grants presumptive Agent Orange exposure status to US service members who served in the territorial seas of Vietnam during the Vietnam War.
- Presumptive coverage would enable eligible veterans to receive Veterans Affairs benefits if they suffer from any of the diseases the U.S. government has linked to Agent Orange.

HR 164: 100% Disability Veterans for Military Travel

- Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.
- Permits veterans with a service-connected, permanent disability rate as total to travel on scheduled and unscheduled military within the U.S. and on scheduled overseas flights on a space-available basis.

HR 552: Meeting the Inpatient Health Care Needs for Far South Texas Veterans Act

- Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.
- Directs the VA Secretary to (1) ensure that the South Texas Veterans Affairs Health Care Center in Harlingen includes a full-service VA inpatient health care facility and (2) if needed, modify the existing facility to meet this requirement.

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HR 975: Servicemember Mental Health Review Act

- *Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.*
- Extends the authority of the Physical Disability Board of Review to review disability determinations of individuals separated because of mental conditions and found to be ineligible for retirement, including separation based on personality or adjustment.
- Aims to alleviate discharge of military sexual assault victims under a personality or adjustment disorder.

HR 1284: Veterans Medical Access Act

- *Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.*
- Authorizes payment under the VA beneficiary travel program for expenses in connection with a medical care of a veteran (with vision impairment, spinal cord injury/ disorder, or multiple amputations) whose travel is in connection to care provided through a VA special disability rehabilitation program.

HR 1725: Veterans Mental Health Accessibility Act

- *Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.*
- Any veterans who served on active duty in a theater of combat operations (specific operations) are eligible for hospital care, medical services, and nursing home care for any mental illness through the VA, regardless of insufficient medical evidence conclude that the mental illness is attributable to combat service.

HR 1770: Offset Amends title 10, United States Code, to eliminate the different treatment under the Survivor Benefit Plan accorded members of the reserve components who die from an injury or illness incurred or aggravated in the line of duty during inactive-duty training compared to members of the Armed Forces who die in the line of duty while on active duty.

- *Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.*
- Makes Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuity for survivors of members of the reserves who die during inactive-duty training the same as such annuity for survivors of members of the regular Armed Services who die on active duty.

HR 1796: Troop Talent Act

- *Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.*
- Directs the Secretaries of military departments to make information on civilian credentialing opportunities available to members of the Armed Forces and to (1) evaluate

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the extent to which training correlates with skills and training required for various civilian certification and licenses and (2) assess the suitability of such training for obtaining and pursuing such certifications and licenses;

- Allows members or veterans to use education assistance provided through the DOD or VA if the successful completion qualifies the student to take the appropriate examination/ be certified or licensed for entry into that occupation or profession;
- Requires the military occupational specialties designated for military skills to civilian credentialing pilot program under the NDAA to include specialties relating to military information technology workforce; and
- Directs the VA Secretary to reestablish the Professional Certification and Licensure Advisory Committee (PCLAC).

HR 1816: Veterans' STEM Education Program

- Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.
- Authorizes the VA Secretary to pay additional money to individuals entitled to post 9/11 education assistance who are pursuing an education program with a STEM focus.

HR 1864: To amend title 10, United States Code, to require an Inspector General investigation of allegations of retaliatory personnel actions taken in response to making protected communications regarding sexual assault.

- Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.
- Requires the IG of the DOD, DHS, or any military department to investigate allegations of retaliatory personnel actions taken in response to making protected communications to such IG regarding alleged instances of rape, sexual assault, or other forms of sexual misconduct in violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

HR 2001: Veterans E-Health & Telemedicine Support Act

- Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.
- Allows a health care professional who is authorized to provide health through the VA and who is license to practice at a location in said state to provide treatment utilizing telemedicine, regardless of whether the patient or professional is located in a facility owned by the federal government.

HR 2056: Veterans Employment Transition Act

- Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.
- Makes the work opportunity tax credit permanent for qualified veterans;

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- Requires DoD and National Guard to inform military personnel how to use tax credit; and
- Requires, Labor, VA, and DoD secretaries to coordinate veteran job training services.

HR 2169: Veterans Education Flexibility Act

- Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.
- Provides that individuals eligible for education assistance under the all-volunteer force education assistance program of the VA may extend enrollment to the end of a quarter or semester if it would expire; and
- Eliminates deadlines for veterans to use education benefits.

HR 2185: Veterans Day Moment of Silence Act

- Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill, which passed as part of HR 2189.
- Directs President to issue a national proclamation calling on the people of the U.S. to observe two minutes of silence on Veterans Day beginning at 3:11 PM (EST) in honor of the service and sacrifice of veterans.

HR 2540: Expedited Hiring for VA Trained Psychiatrists Act

- Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.
- Authorizes VA Secretary to appoint a psychiatrist who completes a residency at a Veterans Health Administration (VHA) facility to a VHA health care position immediately after such residency if (1) the psychiatrist meets the qualifications established in regulation prescribed for the position, and (2) such position has been unfilled for at least 35 days.

HR 2841: Guard and Reserve Equal Access to Health Act

- Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.
- Directs the Secretary of the relevant military department to provide a physical examination to each member who (1) will not otherwise receive one through the department, (2) elects to receive such examination.

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HR 3045: To amend title 10, United States Code, to ensure that the Secretary of Defense provides each member of the Armed Forces, before the member separates from the Armed Forces, with an electronic copy of medical records of the member and a physical examination.

- *Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.*
- Directs the Secretary of the military to provide members of the Armed Forces who are scheduled to be separated from service medical records in an electronic format.

HR 3111: Honoring the Fort Hood Heroes Act

- *Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.*
- Directs the Secretary of the military to award Purple Hearts to members who were killed or wounded during the attack at Fort Hood; and
- Directs the DOD Secretary to award Medals for the Defense of Freedom to civilians and contractors who were killed or wounded in such attack.

HR 3274: Fallen Heroes and Families Assistance Act

- *Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.*
- Amends the Pay Our Military Act to make appropriations to continue programs and activities concerning:
 - Payment of death gratuities to certain survivors of deceased military services members;
 - Payment of pay and allowances due to a member of the Armed Forces and unpaid at the time of the member's death;
 - Payment of authorized funeral and burial expenses; and
 - Continuation of a basic allowance of housing for certain dependents of members who died on active duty.

HR 3327: To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide an extension of the work opportunity tax credit for veterans.

- *Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.*
- Extends work opportunity tax credit for qualified veterans through 2018.

HR 3395: VOW to Hire Heroes Extension Act

- *Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.*
- Extends work opportunity tax credit for qualified veterans through 2017.

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HR 3456: Student Veterans Priority Enrollment Act

- *Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.*
- Prohibits the VA Secretary or a state agency from approving an education program offered by an education institution for purpose of an education assistance program for veterans, unless that institution administers a priority enrollment system that allows veterans or eligible members, or dependents to enroll in courses at the earliest possible time.

HR 3469: SERV (Support Earned Recognition for Veterans) Act

- *Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.*
- Excludes from the definitions of "active duty," "active duty for training," and "inactive duty training," for veteran benefit or employment preference purposes, any service performed at a preparatory school of a service academy by a student who is not otherwise a member of the Armed Forces.

HR 3499: Rural Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act

- *Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.*
- Includes licensed mental health counselors and marriage/ family therapist as participating profession in VA recruit program;
- Allows VA to include IT funding in advanced appropriations for timely replacement of medical equipment;
- Strengthens language allowing VA to provide mental health and support services to immediate family members of veterans who served in Iraq or Afghanistan; and
- Requires the VA to identify and report to Congress on any issues that are impeding provision of telemedicine services to veterans and recommendations to address these issues.

HR 3600: GI Education Benefit Fairness Act

- *Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.*
- Adds wards and foster children to VA definition of dependents so that GI benefits under the DoD and VA are the same.

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HR 3714: Servicemembers and Veterans Prescription Drug Safety Act

- *Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.*
- Directs the Secretary and VA to carry out a program where any veteran, a veteran's spouse, or dependent may deliver such a controlled substance for disposal at a specified facility, subject to the same guidelines and procedures with respect to such delivered substances.

HR 3743: HAVEN (Housing Assistance for Veterans) Act

- *Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.*
- Pilot Program through HUD for grants to non-profits that primarily serve veterans or low-income.

HR 3789: To amend Title 10, United States Code, to exempt the retired pay of certain disabled veterans from the reduced adjustment of retired pay and retainer pay amounts for retired members of the Armed Forces

- *Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.*
- *Fixes problems with the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013*
- Exempts retired members of the Armed Forces under the age of 62 from reduction in cost-of-living adjustments.

HR 3790: To repeal the annual adjustment of retired pay and retainer pay amounts for retired members of the Armed Forces under age 62

- *Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.*
- *Fixes problems with the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013*
- Repeals the provision of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013 that reduces the cost-of-living adjustment to the retirement pay of members of Armed Forces under age 62.

HR 4149: Help Hire our Heroes Act

- *Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.*
- Extends the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program for six months and permits additional veterans to participate in the program.

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HR 4199: To name the Department of Veterans Affairs medical center in Waco, Texas as the “Doris Miller Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center”

- *Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.*
- Designates the Department of VA medical center in Waco, Texas, as the “Doris Miller Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center.”

HR 4504: DOD Suicide Tracking Act

- *Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.*
- Requires the DOD Secretary to prescribe a policy for the development of a standard method for collecting, report, and assessing suicide data and suicide-attempt data involving members of the National Guard and Reserves; and
- Requires the DOD Secretary to direct the Secretary of each military department to development and implement a program to track, retain, and analyze information regarding suicides.

HR 4674: Guarantee Housing for Terminally Ill Veterans Act

- *Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.*
- Requires the VA Secretary to give priority, in providing specially adapted housing assistance for disabled veterans, to an individual who is otherwise eligible and is diagnosed with a terminal illness.

HR 4682: Veterans TRICARE Choice Act

- *Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.*
- Allows an individual’s eligible for TRICARE or a DoD managed health care program to (1) opt to be ineligible, (2) make tax deductible contributions to a health savings account;
- Repeals the limiting period for the use of assistance under the post-Vietnam era veteran’s education assistance program; and
- Applies the assistance extension provided under the all-volunteer force education programs (generally 10 years after the veteran’s last discharge or release from active duty).

HR 4793: Reducing Barriers for Veterans Education Act

- *Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.*
- Allows individual eligible for educational assistance under the post-9/11 education assistance program eligible for assistance with application fees to institutions of higher education.

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HR 4818: Military Spouse Career Advancement Act

- *Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.*
- Codifies the Military Spouse Career Advancement program conducted by the DoD to assist spouses of members of the Armed Forces serving on active duties to pursue education opportunities and career training, to ensure that such education opportunities and training are available to all military spouses.

HR 4841: Veterans' Access to Care through Choice, Accountability and Transparency Act

- *Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.*
- Allows veterans who live more than 40 miles away from a VA facility or veterans who try to schedule an appointment but cannot get one to instead seek care with private doctors who take Medicare, community health centers, Indian Health Service and Department of Defense facilities.
- Allows the immediate firing of high-level officials who are incompetent in their duties. The legislation includes an expedited appeals process to prevent this new authority from being abused for political or other purposes.
- Provide for a more expedited hiring of new medical personnel at hospitals and clinics that lack enough doctors, nurses and other medical staff to provide quality care in a timely manner.
- Allows the VA to lease 26 new medical facilities that would expand access to care.
- Calls for independent commissions to examine how the VA can improve its appointment scheduling practices and its construction projects.
- Ensures that all recently separated veterans taking advantage of the Post 9/11 GI Bill receive in-state tuition at public colleges and universities.
- Extends Post 9/11 GI Bill education benefits to surviving spouses of veterans who have died in the line of duty.
- Improves access to health care for military sexual assault survivors.

HR 4942: Underserved Veterans Access to Health Care Act

- *Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.*
- Increases the number of graduate medical education residency positions (by 2,000) at hospitals administered by the VA Secretary.

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HR 4951: Doctors Helping Heroes Act

- Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.
- Authorizes waiver of the two year foreign residency requirement for medically-trained immigrants who have received medical education or training the US and to seek to apply for a visa or legal permanent residency if:
 - The VA Secretary determines that VA facilities cannot provide sufficient health services to eligible veterans owing to lack of personnel; and
 - The head of the appropriate state agency knows the alien will practice in a VA facility, the physician's work is in the public interest, and the waiver would not bring waivers allocated for one state to more than five.

HR 5007: Restore Accountability in Veterans' Access to Health Care Act

- Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.
- Require the Department of Veterans Affairs to identify the health care occupations with the largest staffing shortages and expedite the hiring process in order to fill these positions.
- Require an assessment of the staffing of each medical facility, measurable productivity standards, a list of current wait times, and a plan and timeline to fill health care occupations with the largest staffing shortages to ensure that the needs of our veterans are met.
- Work to implement high-quality, veteran-centered care by requiring standardized scheduling training for VHA employees.
- Require the utilization of more technology to improve the scheduling system and make care for veterans more efficient.

HR 5023: VALUES (Veteran's Assistance to Lower Unemployment and Enhance VA Services Act) Act:

- Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.
- Amends title 5 to provide additional point to competitive service entrance exam of preference eligible applying for positions at the VA (requires VA to give greater preference to veterans seeking employment).

HR 5054: Veterans' Whistleblower and Patient Protection Act

- Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.
- Ensures that whistleblower reports and patient complaints will be handled at the highest level rather than at local facilities; and

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- Establishes an Officer of Whistleblower and Patient Protection to provide a much-needed, robust investigatory arm to take action on allegations regarding whistleblower retaliation and patient safety.

HR 5618: Veterans Health Administration Management Improvement Act

- Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.
- This bill would establish:
 - A yearly management review by the GAO to properly diagnose the current state of affairs and to develop recommendations for improvement;
 - A pilot program to link the Department of Veterans Affairs' resources to its goals;
 - An internal ombudsman to provide employees with a formal mechanism for reporting management problems up the chain of command; and
 - A veterans' bill of rights allowing veterans to know what they are entitled to, the recommended course of action, and other pertinent information concerning their healthcare.

HR 5088: Responsive & Efficient Appeals Courts for Heroes Act of 2014

- Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.
- Authorizes the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims to hear class action appeals.

H. Res. 620: Release of Sgt. Andrew Tahmooressi

- Rep. Gallego is a cosponsor of this bill.
- Regarding the Marine who has been in a Mexico jail after he accidentally drove into Mexico with personally-owned firearms.

Letters from U.S. Rep. Gallego on VA Accountability and Veterans Advocacy

No Recess for Congress until VA Reform Bill Passes

- Rep. Gallego joined colleagues in a letter requesting that Senate Majority Leader Reid and House Speaker Boehner not let the Senate and House of Representatives go into August recess unless there is successful resolution by the Conference Committee formed

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to work out a compromise between the Senate and House versions of the *Veterans Access to Care Act*.

El Paso VA

- Rep. Gallego joined Rep. O'Rourke in sending a letter to Robert Petzel, Under Secretary of Health, VA; Susan Bowers, VISN 18 Network Director; John Mendoza El Paso VAHCS director
- Requested that the El Paso VAHCS begin an investigation into wait times at their location since improper techniques had been used at the Phoenix VAHCS to mask prolonged wait times.
- Specific requests to investigate the techniques used to measure and report wait times and to ensure that sufficient oversight and safeguards were in place to prevent the types of practices that occurred in Phoenix.

San Antonio, Austin, and Waco

- Rep. Gallego joined Texas Republicans in sending a letter to Acting Inspector General of the VA, Richard Griffin.
- After allegations of manipulation surfaced at the North Central Federal Clinic in San Antonio, the Austin Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic and the Waco Veterans Affairs Medical center, to conceal wait times for veterans.
- These brave and honorable men and women served our country unwaveringly. They sacrificed, and they fought for our country. The allegation that we have failed to give to veterans the same dedication they gave to our country is offensive.
- A thorough investigation of each and every allegation along with severe consequences for individuals found to be guilty of misconduct is paramount.

Nationwide Audit of Scheduling Practices at all VA medical facilities

- Rep. Gallego joined several colleagues in sending a letter to the then-Secretary of the VA, Eric Shinseki, demanding an audit of the scheduling practices at all VA medical facilities throughout the country.

Ensure that Texas Veterans Have Equal Access to Health Care

- Rep. Gallego led an effort among Texas members of Congress to encourage Gov. Rick Perry to expand Medicaid so that approximately 49,000 Texas veterans would receive health care coverage that is available to veterans in many other states. (May 2013)

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Health Care for Female Veterans

- Rep. Gallego joined colleagues in a letter to the Acting Under Secretary for Health at the Department of Veterans Affairs urging him to act quickly to improve the quality of healthcare that female veterans receive through the VA (Titus Letter)

Prevent Sequestration (March 8, 2013)

- In the run-up to implementing sequestration, Rep. Gallego led an effort among Texas Congressional members to House leadership urging that they find a bipartisan resolution to prevent sequestration.
- Their letter noted the very negative economic impacts to the State of Texas, especially the negative impacts on Joint Base San Antonio (Lackland Air Force Base, Camp Bullis, Randolph Air Force Base, and Fort Sam Houston), Laughlin Air Force Base, Fort Bliss, and Fort Hood.

Letter to House Leadership to Allow a Vote on Legislation to Fix the COLA Provision in the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013

- Rep. Gallego authored a letter to Speaker Boehner and then-Majority Leader Cantor encouraging them to allow a vote on legislation to fix the veterans COLA provision in the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013.

Letter to House and Senate Appropriations Leaders to Correct Veterans COLA provision in the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013

- Rep. Gallego authored a letter to the Chairwoman of the Senate Appropriations Committee and Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee urging them to fix the COLA provision in the January 2014 omnibus appropriations bill.

Letter to the Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Armed Services Committee Regarding the Veterans COLA Provision

- Rep. Gallego joined a group of bipartisan colleagues in sending a letter to the leaders of the House Armed Services Committee urging them to address the Veterans COLA reduction in the FY15 National Defense Authorization Act.

Ensure that Veterans and Spouses of Active Duty Military Personnel are Treated Fairly in Comprehensive Immigration Reform

- As the Senate finalized its draft of a Comprehensive Immigration Reform bill, Rep. Gallego led an effort to ensure that non-citizen Veterans and the family members of Active Duty Military

This document last updated October 28, 2014.

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Are you a veteran in need of assistance with the VA? Pete can help. Call the San Antonio office.

Washington, DC
(202) 225-4511

Del Rio, TX
(830) 488-6600

San Antonio, TX
(210) 927-4592

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Eagle Pass, TX
(830) 488-6600

Email: Pete.TX23@mail.house.gov



Website: <http://Gallego.House.Gov>